

News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DOMENICI GAINS \$5.7 MILLION FOR THEL TESTING THIS YEAR

White Sands Missile Range Integral to THEL Development & Testing

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today gained Senate approval for \$5.7 million to ensure adequate testing resources for the Army's Tactical High Energy Laser program (THEL), an important binational program being developed and tested at White Sands Missile Range.

The Senate passed the FY2001 Military Construction Appropriations Bill, with the supplemental appropriations package, today. It will now be sent to a conference committee where differences between House and Senate versions of the bill will be reconciled.

Prior to passage the Senate accepted a Domenici amendment to add funding for THEL to the FY2000 supplemental appropriations package that has been added to the FY2001 Military Construction Appropriations Bill. THEL is funded through a cost-share arrangement between Israel and the United States, with the TRW Corp. having also invested a considerable amount in the program.

"THEL represents one of the first weapons systems utilizing lasers for the purpose of missile defense. High energy laser technologies have the potential to bring a revolutionary shift in U.S. defense capabilities within the next decade," Domenici said.

"I believe the benefits derived from achieving the full array of tests with this laser weapon system at WSMR deserves serious consideration as an emergency item. Without requisite funding in FY2000, a stop work order would have to be issued. We may sacrifice what has been accomplished through THEL and inadvertently undermine efforts in other weapons systems based on high energy lasers if we fail to address this shortfall," he said.

The U.S. Army Space and Missile Defense Command (SMDC), TRW, and test support personnel at WSMR have worked to coordinate the full array of planned tests for THEL. Based upon a government cost-to-completion estimate, an additional \$19.9 million is required to successfully complete THEL testing for this fiscal year. Under the cost share arrangements between the United States, Israel, and TRW, an additional U.S. share of \$5.7

million is required. The Israel share is \$5 million, and TRW's share is \$9.2 million.

Related to THEL funding for next year, Domenici has gained \$15 million in the FY2001 Defense Appropriations Bill for the program. The funding is a rebuff to the administration's budget request that sought no funding for the program.